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FOCUS

THE KING WE SHOULD REMEMBER

School Vouchers: Who Would Benefit? / Taxes, the Budget, and the Poor

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Joint Center for Political Studies

Perspective

Martin Luther King Holiday

His struggles were inspired by his faith in God and his commitment to the brotherhood of man. This faith gave him the strength to climb mountains, to move the powerful, and to walk tall in the valley of the shadow of death. His life of achievement amidst struggle inspires us today. Those who survive him must acknowledge the power of his character, charisma, and creativity.

Other words that can be used to describe the meaning and impact of Martin Luther King are those chosen by the theologian Martin Luther for his own epitaph: "I neither can nor will recant anything, since it is neither right nor safe to act against conscience. . . . Here I stand. I can do no other." Martin Luther King—at another time and place—stood his ground against bigotry, injustice, and immorality. He, too, could do no other.

This month we pay a richly deserved special tribute to King's leadership. The first national holiday marking his birth 57 years ago is a symbolic occasion to reaffirm our commitment to brotherhood, freedom, justice, and equality.

We celebrate to gain strength from his courage, from the beginning in Montgomery in 1955 to the end in Memphis in 1968—13 years that changed and are still changing the life of this nation. We celebrate to say thanks for his victories on so many battlefields: the Montgomery bus boycott, public accommodations, voting rights, and equal employment opportunity. We open our hearts and minds to his inspiration and his sermons of love and hope. In this spirit we can even forgive his persecutors.

But above all, we should use the King holiday to rededicate ourselves to the proposition that Martin Luther King's dream should neither die nor be deferred. We can honor his memory in a thousand ways. I choose to honor him for two legacies that have special meaning to black Americans.

The first challenges each of us to use the power of politics and public office to pursue justice, equality, and true liberation for all Americans. King knew that in America effective political participation is the shortest road to power-sharing and to improving the human condition. Law and moral suasion have limits, but political power endures as long as we profess to be a democratic society. Thus, King called for a nonviolent "revolution of values" that relied, in part, on law and moral suasion, but more heavily on political action. As historian David Lewis put it, King believed that "racial compassion had to be reinforced by old fashioned American political *quid pro quo*."

The second legacy that has special meaning was King's challenge to black Americans to "rise to the level of self-criticism." Doing so, he said, was a "sign of high maturity, not weakness." By self-criticism, King said, "I mean critical thinking about ourselves as a people and the course we have charted or failed to chart."

Rising to the level of self-criticism is an enormous challenge. It means doing some critical thinking about ourselves. It means being willing to face the future with courage and vision, mindful of the past but not shackled by it. It means being unafraid to grasp new ideas that are appropriate to our present circumstances and dilemmas.

As I reflect on these two legacies—political action and self-criticism— in the context of today's realities, I am convinced that blacks should indeed chart new courses in pursuit of justice and equality. We need to rededicate ourselves to *direct action* in order to influence government and society. By direct action I do not mean only confrontation and protest, although they are sometimes appropriate, but a wide range of political and personal initiatives, such as registering, voting, competing for public office, lobbying, mobilizing public opinion, and building coalitions. But with equal vigor Dr. King would have us pursue direct action aimed at spurring our people to become better prepared educationally, to be more productive and more resourceful, and to be more mindful of the values that have sustained us this far.

Eddie N. Williams
President

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The King We Should Remember

by David Garrow

(The author is associate professor of political science at the City College of New York and the City University Graduate Scool. A former visiting fellow at the Joint Center for Political Studies, he is the author of Protest at Selma *and* The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr. *His comprehensive study of Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference,* Bearing the Cross, *will be published later this year.)*

America's first official, national celebration of the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., offers all of us a valuable opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. It also gives us an appropriate occasion to consider the challenges that remain and to ponder the major obstacles faced by present-day proponents of equal rights and economic justice.

In addition, however, the King holiday exposes us to certain risks. Two, in particular, stand out. First, in celebrating the spirit and achievements of the man, we should not forget or minimize his message. King's political agenda for changing and improving American society, after all, reached far beyond what the movement achieved during his own lifetime. Second, in commemorating King's courage and commitment, it is essential that we not focus too exclusively on the civil rights contributions of King alone and thereby slight or ignore the vital roles played by thousands of others. Were we to celebrate King's birthday with an excessive focus on him individually, we would be giving tens of thousands of younger Americans the idea that without a charismatic symbolic leader, meaningful political change cannot be expected to take place in America.

From Civil Rights to Human Rights

The image of Martin Luther King, Jr., that predominates in the minds of many Americans is that of the remarkably talented orator whose "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington is considered one of the great public addresses in U.S. history. Together with his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," written four months earlier, that speech at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28 carried the southern movement's message of racial justice, Biblical faith, and Christian love to millions of people around the globe.

King's emphasis on the centrality of love and nonviolence in the black freedom struggle dated back eight years to December 1955. That was when his fellow community leaders in Montgomery, Alabama, drafted him as president of the new organization they had set up to pursue the municipal bus boycott sparked by the arrest of Mrs. Rosa Parks, who had refused to surrender her seat on a bus to a white man. Barely 27 years old when he first emerged as a symbol of southern blacks' nonviolent refusal to endure segregation any longer, the youthful minister came to represent not only the Montgomery protesters but also other, later activists—those who kicked off the student lunch-counter sit-ins of 1960 and the "freedom rides" of 1961.

But King's dream had other elements in it besides eliminating racial discrimination, loving one's enemies, and practicing nonviolence. During the first nine years of his public career, extending from Montgomery up through the 1965 voting rights demonstrations in Selma, Alabama, his primary political focus was seeking enactment of federal legislation to outlaw segregation and to eliminate the discriminatory practices that prevented black Southerners from exercising political power. "Give us the ballot," King intoned in his first speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, delivered at the oft-forgotten 1957 Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom. Several years later, after the dramatic 1963 protests in Birmingham and then the Selma demonstrations, Congress passed the two major legislative achievements of the civil rights movement—the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Some current retrospectives of the 1960s portray King as a completely successful American reform leader whose dream was fulfilled by those two pieces of legislation and by America's abolition of officially sanctioned racial discrimination. In truth, such a portrayal is highly inaccurate. After 1965, King came to think of himself as far more than a racial reformer, and his explicit political agenda reached far beyond measures like the 1964 and 1965 acts. In his final years, pursuing economic justice at home and nonmilitaristic policies abroad, he suffered deep anguish from America's unwillingness to change its self-destructive national priorities and his own inability to alter the nation's course.

From 1965 on, one of King's most regular public refrains was how the dream he had articulated in Washington in 1963 had turned into "a nightmare." Looking back, he said, the turning point had come hardly two weeks after the March on Washington, when four young girls were killed in the Sunday morning terror-bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Those deaths, like the murders in June 1964 of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, Mississippi, and the Selma-related killings of Jimmie Lee Jackson, James Reeb, and Viola Liuzzo, brought home to King and other activists that the human costs of the movement's victories would be high indeed.

More important in King's political evolution, however, was his gradual and disheartening realization, especially in the fall of 1965, that the daily lives of most black people—particularly the economically deprived in northern cities as well as the deep South—would not be nearly as affected by federal statutes like the 1964 and 1965 acts as he had assumed they would. Economic deprivation—no jobs, poor housing, and inadequate schools—was a far more important and immutable fact of life for America's underclass than the inability to patronize a lunch counter or even cast a ballot.

Beginning in that fall of 1965, therefore, Martin Luther King, Jr., began to sound some much harsher notes in his comments on American society and the fundamental changes he was now coming to realize were required. The core of the problem, he told his Ebenezer Baptist Church congregation in Atlanta one Sunday, was America's inequitable distribution of wealth. "If our economic system is to survive, there has to be a better distribution of wealth. . . . We can't

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Taxes, the Budget, and the Poor

by Lynn Burbridge

(The author, an economist, is a research associate at the Joint Center.)

Just when it seemed as if some tax relief was in sight for low-income families, they were thrown a curve by a Congress and a president struggling to eliminate the U.S. budget deficit. The "relief"—which may yet arrive—was to come in the form of the tax bill drawn up by the House Ways and Means Committee, promising to reduce the taxes paid by the working poor. The "curve" is coming in the form of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act to reduce the federal budget deficit.

The attention now being given to these two issues—raising revenue and balancing the budget—reflects the increased importance of fiscal policy in debates on social policy issues. Until relatively recently, advocates for poor and minority families paid little attention to the creation of federal *revenue*—monies raised to meet the needs of the U.S. budget—or to the relation between revenue and expenditure. Instead, their primary concern had been with only the *expenditure* side of the budget—the allocation of funds to programs and agencies that serve the poor and other disadvantaged groups.

Particularly during the Reagan presidency, however, national attention has shifted from expenditures to revenues. One reason is that many programs serving the poor have suffered sizeable cuts precisely on the grounds that government revenues are limited. Another reason is that the growing tax burden on the working poor has aroused concern about that particular source of revenue. Finally, as the budget deficit has swollen, the goal of reconciling revenues with expenditures has become more urgent; and in the interest of balancing the budget, further cuts may be imposed on programs for poor families.

Tax Changes and the Working Poor

During the past four years, taxes have been declining for everyone except the working poor. Between 1980 and 1984, more and more poor families that had paid no taxes (or a minimal amount) were drawn into the tax system. This is reflected in the findings of a study made by the Urban Institute: during that same period, the federal tax burden (taxes as a percentage of before-tax income) on those whose income puts them in the lowest fifth of the population increased 140 percent (from 0.5 to 1.2 percent). For everyone else, the tax burden decreased (albeit modestly).

The situation throughout most of the 1970s was different. In those years Congress designed the tax code in such a way that if people had incomes below the poverty level (which is three times the cost of a nutritional diet for a family of a given size), they did not have to pay taxes. As inflation pushed up the dollar value of the poverty level, the minimum amount of income on which taxes had to be paid increased accordingly. By 1981, another readjustment in the minimum amount of taxable income seemed necessary. However, the tax reform bill of 1981 failed to make that readjustment. As a result, many low-income families had to pay additional taxes, and some low-income families had to pay taxes for the first time.

Various tax reform bills now before Congress, including the House Ways and Means bill, would change this. They would not only exempt families in poverty from paying taxes, but they would also prevent a repetition of the inflation-triggered situation of the early 1980s. Overall, therefore, the Ways and Means bill and others would promise some tax relief to those people who are struggling to support their families without relying on welfare. (The Ways and Means bill has passed the House but has yet to come before the Senate, where its passage is by no means assured.)

Gramm-Rudman-Hollings

Taxes represent revenues. Expenditures are the other side of the same coin, for ultimately it is desirable to reconcile taxes and revenue with each other.

In 1981, revenues decreased, as Congress cut taxes for nonpoor families and businesses. At the same time expenditures increased, as the monies spent for defense went up. The result has been the largest budget deficit in the history of the United States. Concerned about this, Congress recently passed, and the president signed, the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (known as Gramm-Rudman-Hollings).

That law requires total federal spending to be reduced to specific target levels every year through 1991, when the budget will finally be balanced. If, in any given year, the president and Congress do not lower the budget to the specified target level, automatic across-the-board cuts will be made in both defense and nondefense programs. Fifty percent of all automatic cuts will come from defense and 50 percent from nondefense programs.

Several programs affecting the poor, however, will be exempted from the automatic cuts: AFDC (Aid to Families With Dependent Children), SSI (Supplemental Security Income), WIC (Women, Infants, Children), Food Stamps, Child Nutrition, Medicaid, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. We will refer to all these as transfer programs. Cuts in other programs will be automatic, but limited. For example, several health programs (including Medicare, veterans, community, migrant, and Indian health programs) will be limited to cuts of no more than 1 percent in the first year and 2 percent in the second. (These cuts are small, but the cost of health care is increasing; and the working poor—many of whom have no health insurance—often rely on community health programs.) Still other programs, such as those for unemployment, student loans, and child support enforcement (which is very important for female-headed households), face cutbacks subject to special rules.

After the programs with various limitations and special rules are cut, all remaining programs must be cut by an equal percentage to achieve the deficit reduction prescribed by law. Among the programs that may be subject to unrestricted cuts are many that serve the low-income population, such as education, housing, and employment and training programs.

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School Vouchers: Who Would Benefit?

by Edwin Dorn

(The author is a deputy director of research at the Joint Center.)

This past fall the Reagan administration drafted legislation for a school voucher program. Tentatively entitled The Equity and Choice Act of 1985, the proposed bill states that the purposes of vouchers are

> to improve the educational achievement of educationally deprived children by expanding opportunities for their parents to choose schools that best meet their needs, to foster diversity and competition among school programs for educationally deprived children, [and] to increase private sector involvement in providing educational programs for educationally deprived children.

Basically, the proposal would change the way the federal government spends the $3 billion available for educationally disadvantaged children under Chapter 1 of the 1981 Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (formerly Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). Currently, the funds are spent to help those educationally disadvantaged children who attend public schools that offer compensatory education programs. Of the roughly 10 million educationally disadvantaged children in the United States, approximately half do not receive Chapter 1 assistance—partly because they are not enrolled in schools offering the compensatory services.

Vouchers would enable Chapter 1 monies to be used in a variety of ways. Parents would no longer have to keep their children in the schools where they are currently enrolled. Instead, theoretically, parents could take the vouchers (which would have cash value) and use them to help defray the costs of enrolling their children in another public school in the same district, in a public school in another district, or in a private or parochial school that offers programs for the educationally disadvantaged.

Much of the debate about the administration's proposal involves the Constitutional question of the separation of church and state. Indeed, the administration's voucher proposal could allow the circumventing of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1985 *Aguilar* decision, which prevents the use of Chapter 1 funds in parochial schools. The two questions likely to be particularly pertinent to *Focus* readers, however, are the following:

- Will such a program actually improve the options available to the parents of educationally disadvantaged children?
- Does the proposal have civil rights implications? (A frequent complaint about the voucher plan is that it will permit the use of federal funds in "segregation academies," schools created to avoid the Supreme Court's desegregation mandates.)

A Viable Option?

The administration estimates that the average value of a voucher will be about $600. It derives this figure by dividing the $3 billion compensatory education budget by the approximately 5 million children who participate. But the way in which Chapter 1 monies are spent depends on where one lives, so this average figure obscures a very broad range of actual expenditures, from a high of $1,100 per child in Alaska to a low of about $280 in California. Similarly, the real value of a voucher would vary by state. Further, as was suggested earlier, the number of children who receive compensatory education services has been restricted because of the ways in which the funds are allocated. If the funds were no longer tied to specific schools, the number of eligible students would grow, thereby greatly reducing the value of a voucher—to as little as $150 in California.

The estimated average cost of a voucher must be related to another figure: the average cost of an elementary school education. The average per pupil cost of a *public* school education is $3,000 a year, and public schools charge parents who live (and pay taxes) in another school district various amounts for educating their children. Many high-quality private schools charge much more than public schools do. (Many, of course, charge less.) A poor parent who has an average-value $600 voucher would have to make up the difference.

Parents who could come up with the additional hundreds or thousands of dollars needed to take advantage of the vouchers would then confront another problem: the proposed legislation would not require districts or schools to accept educationally disadvantaged children from other districts or schools. A poor parent in Washington, D.C., for example, might identify a potentially ideal school for his or her child in Fairfax County, Virginia. But if the school refused to accept the student, the parent's option would not be a viable one.

Thus, vouchers are not likely to enhance options greatly for large numbers of parents, and the administration's claims for the proposal are probably exaggerated. But if this is so, then one of the alleged evils of vouchers is probably also exaggerated: the program is not likely to lead to a massive abandonment of the public schools.

Support for Segregation Academies?

Nearly one-half of the language in the administration's proposal is devoted to the subject of "nondiscrimination by private schools." This amount of attention to civil rights is encouraging, at first glance. A careful reading of the text, however, suggests that the proposal was crafted to protect segregated private schools from unwanted interference.

The draft bill declares that "vouchers do not constitute Federal financial assistance" to private schools. This language permits circumvention of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits federal monies from going to any program or institution that practices discrimination.

Further, the draft bill appears to protect segregated private schools from close scrutiny by the Internal Revenue Service. This is important because only schools that have been given tax-exempt status by the

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The King We Should Remember

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have a system where some people live in superfluous, inordinate wealth, while others live in abject, deadening poverty."

The attempt of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1966 to build a successful urban movement in Chicago further impressed upon King how much more intractable America's economic inequalities were than her racial mores. "There are few things more thoroughly sinful than economic injustice," King told one audience, and regrettably, "large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice and humanity." To his aides, King spoke of the need to raise "class issues," issues "that relate to the privileged as over against the underprivileged." Part of America's problem, King knew, was that billions of dollars were being spent to wage Lyndon Johnson's neo-colonial war in Vietnam rather than fight the war on poverty in America. King decried America's involvement in Vietnam in exceptionally harsh language throughout early 1967. Even so, from then until his death, his primary concern remained how to devise a program and a strategy for bringing about a revolutionary economic transformation of American society. "We have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights," he told one SCLC staff retreat, "an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society."

King wistfully realized that up until 1965, "we really thought we were making great progress. . . . We somehow felt that we were going to win the total victory, before we analyzed the depths and dimensions of the problem." Civil rights until 1965 had been "a reform movement, . . . but after Selma and the voting rights bill we moved into a new era, which must be an era of revolution." What America required was "a radical redistribution of economic and political power," whereby "the whole structure of American life must be changed." By August 1967, therefore, King was calling for a program of mass civil disobedience to disrupt Washington and other major cities in order to force the federal government to provide jobs or income for all needy Americans. The aim of this march on Washington would not be "to have a beautiful day," as in August 1963, but to begin a revolutionary transformation—and not integration—of American life. "Let us therefore not think of our movement as one that seeks to integrate the Negro into all the existing values of American society," he stressed to his SCLC aides. King's assassination on April 4, 1968, in Memphis prevented him from bringing that project—the Poor People's Campaign—to the radical fruition he had been envisioning throughout the final months of his life.

Thus, the remarkable orator of that 1963 march and the successful reform leader who desegregated public facilities and opened up the South's ballot boxes between 1955 and 1965 should not be the only Martin Luther King, Jr., whom we commemorate. Americans need to be reminded of King's later life and message. That message is challenging rather than reassuring, and is acutely discomforting to those who would prefer to make Martin Luther King, Jr., into a safely mythical American hero rather than struggle with the profound present-day implications of his unfulfilled political agenda.

A Movement of Many

A celebration of King's legacy, however, requires more than simply a truthful appreciation of his fundamentally radical ideas. It also requires a straightforward acknowledgment that, as long-time activist Ella Baker has accurately said, "The movement made Martin rather than Martin making the movement." To emphasize that a proper appreciation for King's contributions requires us also to celebrate the valuable work of others is not to show disregard for King; indeed, during his own lifetime King as much as anyone stressed that his role in the movement was only one modest piece of a much larger mosaic. From Montgomery onward, he willingly accepted the position of public spokesman for and representative of thousands of others who never received media acclaim. The initial organizers of the Montgomery boycott—Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, Mary Fair Burks, and E. D. Nixon, among others—were people whose names even now are known only to friends and scholars, not the general public. Likewise, the invaluable contributions of most of the South's staunchest activists—people like Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee workers Robert Parris Moses, Diane Nash, and Charles Sherrod, or Selma's Amelia Boynton Robinson and Marie Foster—are known only to careful students of the movement. Even some of King's closest colleagues and advisors—Fred Shuttlesworth, Ralph Abernathy, Bayard Rustin, and Stanley Levison—have never received appropriate public recognition, although others, like Andrew Young, are deservedly major public figures.

During the 1960s, many local movements repeatedly implored King to visit *their* town. "Everybody wanted Dr. King more involved in wherever they were," Virginia's Reverend Milton Reid recalls, "because we saw this as really a Messiah type, that would inspire people; it would bring about change." King appreciated how his prophetic oratory and the church-based appeal of the southern civil rights movement could move hundreds of listeners to commit themselves to activism in ways they never had before, but he openly regretted people's presuming that efforts could take place *only if* Martin Luther King, Jr., came to town. Too much emphasis on the inspirational value of a single symbolic leader, King realized, could be immobilizing instead of stimulating, for he simply could not be everywhere at once. If local activists were conditioned to await the great man's presence, probably less mobilization would take place than if people committed themselves to moving ahead on their own, under indigenous leadership.

That same danger, or perhaps even a greater one, lies in celebrating King's birthday without setting him in a fuller context and seeing his contributions as part of a far larger human tableau. Any account of the civil rights movement that focuses excessively on one individual would not only ignore or distort the roles of others, creating a misunderstanding of our history; it would also, implicitly or explicitly, convey the message that singularly great individuals are a prerequisite to meaningful change.

Nothing could be more wrong, or more harmful, than the belief that significant initiatives must wait upon the

emergence of an oratorically-skilled symbolic leader such as King. Harvard educator Charles Willie, one of King's 1948 classmates at Morehouse College, has beautifully articulated the danger:

> By idolizing those whom we honor, we do a disservice both to them and to ourselves. By exalting the accomplishments of Martin Luther King, Jr., into a legendary tale that is annually told, we fail to recognize his humanity—his personal and public struggles—that are similar to yours and mine. By idolizing those whom we honor, we fail to realize that we could go and do likewise.

Or, as Diane Nash says, "if people think it was Martin Luther King's movement, then today they—young people—are more likely to say, 'Gosh, I wish we had a Martin Luther King here today to lead us.' . . . If people knew how that movement started, then the question they would ask themselves is, 'What can I do?'"

School Vouchers: Who Would Benefit?

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IRS will be able to participate in the voucher program. For the past dozen years, no school that practices discrimination has been eligible for tax-exempt status. But the administration's proposal would alter the role of the IRS in supporting nondiscrimination laws. To escape IRS scrutiny, virtually all a school would need to do is publish a statement claiming that it does not discriminate. Specifically, a school would be eligible to participate in the voucher program if it "includes in any published bylaws, advertisements, admission application forms, and other published materials a statement that it does not discriminate against student applicants or students on the basis of race." It was under such a lax nondiscrimination enforcement standard that the IRS, this past summer, granted tax-exempt status to Prince Edward Academy, a private school in Virginia created expressly to provide education to those seeking to avoid desegregated schools.

To render a school ineligible to participate in the proposed voucher program, one would need to show beyond a shadow of a doubt that the school practices discrimination, and one would need to show this using the administration's criteria. One criterion is whether a school has discriminated against a specific student within the previous year. That a school is known far and wide as a segregation academy and that it has never admitted a black student would be virtually irrelevant. In the administration's language, "the term 'racially discriminatory policy' shall not include failure of any institution to pursue or achieve any . . . racial representation in the student body."

Finally, the administration's proposal would institute a major shift in enforcement practice. *Only* the Attorney General of the United States would have authority "to investigate and to determine whether a private eligible educational institution is following a racially discriminatory policy." Under the 1964 Civil Rights Act, a parent who thinks his or her child has been discriminated against has two courses of action: suing the school directly, or requesting federal intervention. The administration's proposal omits the first option. A parent who wanted to press a charge of discrimination would therefore need to secure support from the attorney general, that is, from Edwin Meese.

Many Americans believe that poor parents should have the same range of choices that middle-class parents have and that a more competitive environment might lead many public schools to raise their standards and improve their offerings. On these grounds, the use of vouchers or other devices to improve educational options is commendable.

The administration's voucher proposal, however, would fall far short of serving its stated purposes. Very few educationally disadvantaged children would benefit from it, and in the end, the proposal's most pronounced effect would be to reduce civil rights enforcement, not to enhance educational opportunities for disadvantaged children.

Taxes, the Budget, and the Poor

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At this point we do not know definitely which cuts will be necessary and which programs will be hit hardest. What we do know is that the deficit reduction act requires the budget deficit for fiscal year 1986 to be no more than $171.9 billion. On February 1 of this year the president is required to issue an order (effective March 1) to eliminate any "excess deficit"—the amount by which the deficit for fiscal year 1986 will exceed $171.9 billion. The president's order is to be based on a report by the General Accounting Office identifying the estimated excess deficit for FY 1986 and the percentage reductions that will be necessary in each program account to eliminate it.

Preliminary reports suggest that the 1986 budget deficit will be $220 billion; thus, the "excess deficit" may be as high as $50 billion. In this first year of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, however, the law limits total cuts to $11.7 billion. So the president's order will probably include cuts for this amount rather than for the entire "excess" over $171.9 billion.

Although the direct effect on cash and in-kind (transfer) payments of either the tax bill or Gramm-Rudman-Hollings will be small, the indirect effect may be large. To eliminate the possibility of an "excess deficit" in the first place, the president or Congress may cut transfer programs. They might do this if, for example, they wanted to ensure that a more-favored program would not be subject to automatic cuts. This is particularly likely to happen if tax reform does not result in a major increase in revenues to finance the budget.

The struggle over the budget and the budget deficit promises to be a wrenching one in the months and years to come. Whatever choices are made will have serious implications for us all, and particularly for those who live in poverty.

(Editor's Note: The February issue of *Focus* will contain a special supplement on tax reform, prepared by Dr. Burbridge.)

Telescope

New Joint Center Publication on Black Economic Progress

A new JCPS publication, *Trends, Prospects, and Strategies for Black Economic Progress*, by economist Andrew Brimmer, examines recent trends in employment and income for blacks and for whites and trends in income distribution within the black community. The author also identifies a combination of private initiatives and public policies that he believes will improve the economic status of blacks.

In his foreword to *Trends, Prospects, and Strategies*, Joint Center President Eddie N. Williams says: "Too often, the debate [on how to remedy blacks' economic problems] is polarized by arguments either for increasing governmental assistance or for almost totally eliminating it. In this study, noted economist Andrew Brimmer strikes a much needed balance. . . . Instead of painting a picture in pure black and white, he suggests a blending of strategies, some calling for less reliance on the federal government, others requiring a strengthening of the nation's wavering commitment to affirmative action."

Dr. Brimmer is president of Brimmer and Company, Inc., an economic and financial consulting firm based in Washington, D.C. He is also a former member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

Copies are available for $5.95 each from the Joint Center.

JCPS and Miller Brewing Company Unveil Paintings of Famous Black Politicians

The Joint Center and Miller Brewing Company are co-hosting the unveiling of a portrait tribute to blacks who have been prominent in the political arena. The "Gallery of Greats: Black Political Firsts" collection, painted by Colorado Springs artist Clarence Shivers, will be introduced at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Washington, D.C., on February 18, 1986. Miller Brewing Company plans to display the portraits on Capitol Hill and at Howard University for four weeks and then send them on a multi-year national tour.

The portraits honor 12 men and women who blazed trails in public service. The 12 include Mary McLeod Bethune, who in 1936 was named the first black woman adviser to the U.S. National Youth Administration; Robert N. C. Nix, Jr., who in 1984 became the first black chief justice of a state Supreme Court; and former U.S. Senator Edward W. Brooke, who was elected to the Senate 20 years ago.

Shivers, who was one of the original Tuskegee Airmen—a highly skilled group of black World War II fighter pilots—has painted since childhood and has won many awards. In 1983, his "Gallery of Greats" collection featured 12 oil portraits honoring civil rights leaders. In 1977, his painting "Portrait of a Great American," honoring Martin Luther King, was included in Sidney Poitier's film *A Piece of the Action*.

Ford Foundation President to Speak at JCPS Dinner

Franklin A. Thomas, president and chief executive officer of the Ford Foundation, will be the featured speaker at the Joint Center's ninth annual dinner, to be held March 26, 1986, at the Washington Hilton Hotel. John J. Creedon, president and chief executive officer of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, is the national chairman of the dinner. U.S. Congressman William H. Gray III (PA), who chairs the Budget Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, is chairman of the general dinner committee.

Members of the dinner advisory committee are Thornton F. Bradshaw, chairman of RCA Corporation; Charles L. Brown, chairman of AT&T; John Filer, former chairman of Aetna Life and Casualty Company; Douglas A. Fraser, former president of the United Auto Workers; Clifton C. Garvin, chairman of Exxon Corporation; Reginald H. Jones, former chairman of General Electric Company; Robert E. Kirby, former chairman of Westinghouse Electric Corporation; Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO; George Weissman, chairman of the executive committee of Philip Morris, Inc.; and Jerome B. Wiesner, president emeritus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Tickets for the dinner are now available. Sponsors' tables of 10 cost $5,000; patrons' tables of 10 cost $2,000; and individual tickets cost $200. Reservations may be made with Alfreda Edwards at 202-626-3555.

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Joint Center for Political Studies

1301 Pa. Ave., N.W., Suite 400
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